Finding Time for Training and Collaboration

Ideas for Finding Time

Participants in the Iowa Professional Development Model Orientation Session on September 16, 2003 generated this list of ideas for finding time for collaboration and training.

Ideas for Types of Structures Needed
❑ Study groups;
❑ Common planning times for teams during school day;
❑ Expand idea of mentoring program so everyone has an "innovation buddy;"
❑ Brown Bag lunch learning.

Ideas for Adding Calendar Days
❑ Add calendar days to school year;
❑ Change school calendar;
❑ Make teaching year-round job and pay teachers;
❑ Fund more days for professional development.

Ideas for Inservices/Early Release/Late Start
❑ Early outs scheduled at least monthly--weekly better;
❑ Stagger 1/2 day inservices so elementary on one day and secondary on a different day;
❑ At high school level have a modified schedule for early release days, i.e. one week periods 1, 3, 5, 7 and next week periods 2, 4, 6, 8;
❑ Adjust length of day to create blocks of time for early outs/late starts;
❑ 4-day student/5-day teacher week;
❑ Very focused agenda and build in additional 9 days of professional development by:
    +1/2 hour 1 morning per week
    +1 hour after school per week
    <u>+1 common planning time per week</u>
     Based on 37 weeks + 9 additional DAYS of planning time;
❑ Early starts to accumulate time to swap for professional development time;
❑ 15 minutes off contract time (before/after);
❑ Non-contract time (before/after kids);
❑ Create a "fun night"—socialize and learn;

Ideas for Modifying Teacher Schedules during Student Day
❑ Block scheduling provides more possibility of flexibility;
   o Get rid of non-essential "clutter" for students;
   o Individual time for appropriate content learning for students;
   o Digital learning for students;
   o Leaves more time for collaborative work for teachers;
❑ Merge classes for assemblies/films/common activities with fewer adults supervising;
❑ Schedule common planning time for learning teams or other appropriate groups;
❑ Collaborative learning scheduled as part of the school day;
❑ Analyze and identify non-efficient uses of time;
❑ All teachers at each grade level have 1 common planning time a week;
❑ Schedule back-to-back sessions where teachers are released on a scheduled basis;
❑ Interdisciplinary teams set time aside for professional development, reflection, coaching;
❑ Team time in each building with tight agendas;

- ❑ Innovative scheduling;
  - o Increase teacher planning time during daily schedule (add minutes);
  - o Rotate planning for culminating activities in social studies, science, etc. and use associates (or volunteers) for this time;
- ❑ Creative use of staff assignments.

Ideas for Refocusing Use of Existing Meetings
- ❑ Use time that is set aside for staff meetings for training, video demonstrations, data analysis, collaboration, etc.--do other work by e-mail or staff bulletins.

Ideas for Time Beyond School Day/Week/Year
- ❑ Collaboratively plan summer course work and other collaborative learning activities;
- ❑ Saturday sessions, e.g. Koffee Klatch;
- ❑ Late afternoon potluck or pizza—nice change; something to look forward to after working together; incentive;
- ❑ Plan at another place; fresh environment (coffee house, restaurants, etc.);
- ❑ Adding time to the school day--extending school year; use the extra days for staff development.

Ideas for Efficient Use of Time
- ❑ Pre-plan professional development sessions; share plans and agendas in advance; have participants read ahead; timeline for completion; etc.
- ❑ Discontinue practices no longer needed; time audit to determine amount being spent;
- ❑ Use teacher shared planning time for new learning;
- ❑ Lunch and Learn sessions;
- ❑ Book groups/Study groups before and after school--could spend first 20 minutes reading and then talking;
- ❑ Teachers involved in scheduling; they will find time if they look—teacher power!
- ❑ Potluck breakfast—teachers come before contract or during lunch;
- ❑ Do time audit and use to allocate time for peer collaboration;
- ❑ Trade building meeting time that could be handled in memos, etc. and redirect to Professional Development;
- ❑ Using 1-2 prep times a week;
- ❑ Better use of e-mail for announcements;
- ❑ Early dismissals that are planned a year ahead;
- ❑ Bring professional articles to department meetings to read and discuss;
- ❑ Use faculty meetings for collaboration and team training instead of information.

Ideas for Use of Technology
- ❑ Web-based tools:
  - o InTime videos with structured learning activities and times to "share" later;
  - o Chat sessions for collaboration and discussion;
  - o Interactive journal (could be e-mail) with learning partner;
  - o Message boards;
  - o Web-based training and/or video classes that model the strategy;
  - o Videoconferencing;
  - o Video stream, threaded discussions, i.e. bulletin board;
- ❑ Information management systems;
  - o Use videos/articles to read and reflect, then process with whole faculty (e.g. notes on bulletin board);
- ❑ Better use of ICN;
- ❑ Videotaping in building for demonstrations to be used in study groups.

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Ideas for Support Resources to Generate Teacher Time
- ❑ Substitute teachers:
  - ○ Rotate several substitute teachers through the building;
  - ○ For staff to be out of classroom for planning, collaboration;
  - ○ Substitute teacher has lesson for large group of students; associates provide support in implementation of task;
  - ○ Take classes for teachers writing grants to free up time to do;
- ❑ Aides:
  - ○ Take students 2 days a week to free up planning time;
  - ○ Hire for duties (e.g. recess) to give teachers more time;
- ❑ Principals cover classes during professional development collaboration;
- ❑ Implement "reading buddies" where older/younger students read to each other; frees up time for teachers to observe others;
- ❑ Other teachers:
  - ○ If 1/2 time kindergarten teachers don't have students, go and cover for others;
  - ○ High school teachers cover for each other;
  - ○ Non-reading area staff cover for others to learn strategies;
- ❑ Community support:
  - ○ Use outside organizations (i.e. YMCA) to take students for 1 1/2 hours;
  - ○ Parent volunteers:
  - ○ Read to students freeing up teacher to observe others;
  - ○ Encourage certified teacher community members to volunteer;
- ❑ Link with colleges/universities to free up time.

Ideas for Collaborating with Other Districts
- ❑ Coordinating calendars for inservice collaboration for multiple districts;
- ❑ Use multi-district leadership teams for planning;
- ❑ Regional coordination of schedules so districts share professional development;
- ❑ Team with neighboring districts to develop agreements for subs.

Ideas for Leadership Role(s)
- ❑ Administrative intervention to create release time;
  - ○ Teacher participation in leadership team and culture can be motivational; teachers will often see it as professional renewal and spend time on their own;
- ❑ Plan on principal's responsibilities;
- ❑ Use staff for ideas on how to find time;
- ❑ Professional Development Leadership Teams specific to buildings;
- ❑ Modify curriculum to reflect new teaching strategies.

Ideas for On-going Technical Assistance
- ❑ Opportunities need to be developed and planned at the DE level to model for AEAs and LEAs;
- ❑ Teachers take classes for credit through Drake and AEA based on goals to become local leaders;
- ❑ Presenter of theory provides modeling and coaching in individual classrooms;
- ❑ Build capacity of leadership team to provide support and be facilitators of professional development;
- ❑ Must model how to be reflective and how to coach peers;
- ❑ Offer on-site university classes for credit;
- ❑ Individual peer coaching by DE/AEA/LEA staff.

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Ideas for Cultural Issues
- ❑ Modeling new norms by the leader for using time for building goals to create a new school climate/culture;
- ❑ Develop a professional culture that encourages activities like Lunch and Learn, learning times outside the contract day, etc.;
- ❑ Culture change to impact "teachers walking out at 4:00";
- ❑ Teacher Training Issue
  - o Neophyte teachers should be taught they are lifelong learners and their built-in breaks and free time during the day should be used in honing their teaching skills and continuing to learn in order to boost student achievement;
- ❑ Time issue sometimes a "blocking" behavior;
- ❑ Do a good job with PR so parents understand release time is impacting student achievement;
- ❑ Train teacher teams to become high performance teams who are able to capitalize on the limited time available.

Ideas for Board/Community Education
- ❑ Change in policy:
  - o Involve school boards so they have a good understanding of the importance of adopting the intervention;
- ❑ Ask newspaper person to come to early release professional development days to highlight positive results in newspaper article to gain public support.

Ideas for Incentives
- ❑ Allowing staff development credit for work done during contract time;
- ❑ Comp time/flex time offered;
- ❑ Increase teacher pay when doing certain work;
- ❑ Teachers take classes for credit based on goals;
- ❑ Study groups for credit—books, web, inservices;
- ❑ Saturday classes and summer workshops—teachers are paid to attend or offered credit;
- ❑ Coaches with flex time;
- ❑ Business partnerships that offer stipends;
- ❑ Offer on-site university classes for credit;
- ❑ Make time useful to teachers so they see value in time they are committing.

Ideas for Financial Support
- ❑ Local business support;
- ❑ Title I funds for positions (staff);
- ❑ State fully fund Teacher Quality bill;
- ❑ Use extra resources, i.e. grants, foundations, legislated funding, indirect costs, etc.;
- ❑ Seriously restructure budgets.

Finding Time: Activity for Your Staff

Finding time for research-based professional development strategies is often difficult in the busy schedules of teachers and administrators. Sometimes it takes thinking about utilizing time in a different way. In other cases, it may be a matter of making professional development a high priority when making decisions about time. Use this activity with the District Professional Development Team and/or district staff to generate ideas for how you can make time for the Professional Development Design you have developed.

Time is the scarcest commodity in most schools. Finding time for teachers to collaborate in order to implement the changes they have planned for professional development and school improvement can be challenging when schools are not already structured for this activity.

Options For Providing Teachers Time For Collaboration

1. Administrators free teachers by taking their classes

2. Large-group instruction

3. Independent study and research

4. Instructional assistants

5. Student Teachers/interns

6. Early release one day a week

Activity Directions

Step 1: Review the list above and generate more specific options based on your local district.

Step 2: Prioritize the list, placing a "1" by your top priority for gaining teacher collaboration time, and so on down the list.

Discuss other options with your team using brainstorming rules (e.g., record all options without judgment, stopping the process only to clarify meaning of options.

Allow time for each person to prioritize individually their 1st – 5th choices on the list before discussing and making a decision as a group what your group priorities are.

It is rare that one option will provide all the time you need for small groups of teachers to meet on a weekly basis to work on their implementation. Think about the amount of time required in the professional development design you have created, your current structures for teacher collaborative work, and then determine how many of your top options for creating time will be needed.